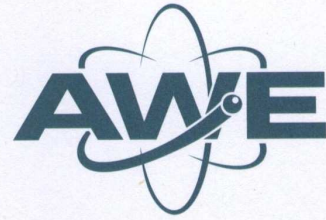


Reply to: F161.2
Direct Dial: 0118 9857317
Direct Fax: 0118 982 4500
Ref: DI/JAD
Your Ref:



Mr Peter Burt
Nuclear Information Service
Ibex House
85 Southampton Street
Reading
RG1 2QU

Aldermaston • Reading
Berkshire • RG7 4PR
Tel 0118 981 4111

7 September 2010

Dear Mr Burt

Thank you for your letter of 23 August about the fire in an explosives facility at AWE Aldermaston on 3 August.

We recognise, of course, the need to keep people informed, and we have thus sought to be proactive in our communications about the incident throughout. We promptly announced at the outset our intention to conduct an independent investigation, and we have made it clear that we will share the findings with our Local Liaison Committee, with local residents and with the wider public. We have issued several media statements, which are also posted on our website. I hope therefore that you will accept that we have made efforts to be open about this incident.

In keeping with our common goal of seeking to avoid alarming local residents, we did not make a specific announcement on the subject of asbestos. That was because AWE's UKAS accredited asbestos team quickly confirmed that asbestos was not an issue which presented risk to either our staff or the general public. Furthermore, inspections of the emergency response personnel and vehicles - both during and after the incident - identified no asbestos contamination.

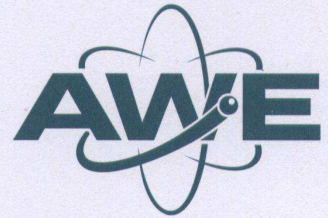
As is to be expected given its age and purpose, the structure of the building in question does incorporate some asbestos. The type of asbestos used for this purpose is amosite. As we made clear in our latest statement, while the structure of the building contains some asbestos which sustained damage, this is being dealt with in accordance with established safety procedures. Beyond that, however, thorough sampling - both on and off-site - has confirmed that any asbestos was localised to the immediate vicinity of the building and did not affect staff or members of the public. Given these circumstances, we believe that no public warning was necessary - nor would any useful purpose have been served in raising an issue which posed no risk to our staff or members of the public.

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AWE complies fully with the control of asbestos regulations and we approach all of our statutory obligations very seriously indeed. We have, of course, been working closely with the various regulatory bodies that oversee activities at AWE. Had any public warnings been appropriate, they would have been made in association with these bodies.

I believe these points address all but the last three of the questions you raised. As to these, I can confirm that all relevant issues relating to asbestos will be addressed in AWE's investigations into the incident. We do hold an asbestos register for all buildings constructed on our sites prior to 2000, and we have in place written arrangements (which include access as necessary to specialist advice) for dealing with large scale fires and the release of hazardous materials through fire or other events.

I hope this provides the reassurance you seek.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A Jupp', is written over a faint horizontal line.

Andrew Jupp
Director Infrastructure Programme